UNITED
NATIONS

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Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

S/1998/467
4 June 1998

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

LETTER DATED 4 JUNE 1998 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF ETHIOPIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

With reference to the letter from the Permanent Representative of Eritrea to the United Nations addressed to you on 3 June 1998, and its annex, the press release by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the State of Eritrea (S/1998/459), I have the honour to transmit herewith a press statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia issued on 3 June 1998.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Duri MOHAMMED
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

98-15613 (E) 040698

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ANNEX

Press statement issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia on 3 June 1998

The international community is well aware of the crisis that has developed between Ethiopia and Eritrea since the Eritrean aggression against Ethiopia on 12 May 1998, as a result of which Eritrea still occupies the Ethiopian locality of Badme and part of Shiraro. This aggression carried out by Eritrea with tanks and heavy weapons is now public knowledge and has been widely reported by the international media, including eyewitness reporters. Despite some prevarication, Eritrea would hardly deny this.

What Ethiopia has done in response to this unprovoked aggression is to denounce the aggression and call upon Eritrea to withdraw from Ethiopian territory. Ethiopia's preference is for the crisis to be settled peacefully, in a civilized manner and legally. Ethiopia is for legality and for civility and not for war.

This is why Ethiopia has continued to cooperate to the maximum level possible with the facilitators.

But even while the efforts of the facilitators has been under way, Eritrea has refused to desist from its provocative activities and from further attempts to create other facts on the ground. This explains the yet another attempt by Eritrea to take over additional Ethiopian localities in the past few days, specifically the localities of Aiga and Aliteina. It did not succeed. This latest aggression by Eritrea has also been widely reported by the international media. But Ethiopia was not diverted by this from allowing the efforts of the facilitators to continue and thus has desisted from aggravating the situation. In fact, what Ethiopia did was to ask members of the international media to leave the vicinity so that the work of the facilitators may not face undue complications.

But the Eritrean Government appears to have been set at continuing with the pattern demonstrated on 12 May 1998, because, convinced that there could not be eyewitness accounts of their aggression, they again decided to launch another attack this morning (the morning of 3 June) in the vicinity of Zala Ambesa, Aiga and Aliteina, an effort which, as usual, was designed to create facts on the ground, and which failed.

Because this latest aggression by Eritrea could not be confirmed by the international media, Eritrea thought it could get away with shifting the blame onto Ethiopia, thus the press release today by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the State of Eritrea, accusing Ethiopia of aggression.

It is the position of the Ethiopian Government that Eritrea would benefit little by trying to hoodwink the international community. It would benefit little from trying to create additional facts on the ground. Its military aggression should stop and it should allow the facilitators to make a difference

for peace. This is Ethiopia's preference, as it has been since the first aggression was carried out by Eritrea on 12 May 1998.

Eritrea's attempt to create additional facts on the ground and, when this fails, to try to make Ethiopia appear as an aggressor like Eritrea, is increasingly becoming a new strategy of the Eritrean authorities. This is the whole essence of the press release by the Eritrean Foreign Ministry referred to above.

It would be rather odd for Ethiopia, which has refused to respond in kind to the Eritrean aggression of 12 May and which continues to do the maximum possible to assist the facilitators, to now engage in activities that would harm this effort.

Eritrea should do likewise: help the facilitators as Ethiopia does, so that their efforts, conducted under difficult circumstances, can succeed, and so that this crisis can be solved peacefully. This is the preference of Ethiopia. It should be that of Eritrea as well. Eritrea's cooperation with the facilitators is the only way to ensure the peaceful resolution of the crisis.